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# Safe Passages: Healthy Families, Children, Youth, and Individuals

*Government has to do its job—and do it well—but in the end, no community can succeed without strong families. Everything we do should put families first and make our city a good place to raise children.*

— Anthony A. Williams, Mayor

*My Mom works late sometimes and the streets are dark when she comes in ... My mom takes me all the way to Maryland to play sports because she says there is more organization and have more parent and community help.*

— Eugene, Citizen, Age 12

**J**ust as neighborhoods are the key building blocks of a city, families are the key building blocks of a neighborhood. Strong families create healthy communities where neighbors know and trust each other, and where children grow into healthy and productive adults.

Unfortunately, too many families in our neighborhoods face troubles with poverty and violence, drug addiction and disease. For the young members of such families, these troubles can greatly impair their ability to become healthy and productive adults. For example:

- Nearly 60 percent of the District's children live in single parent households.
- For an extended period, the District of Columbia has ranked 51<sup>st</sup> nationally among states in a range of child/youth well-being indicators.
- Expenditures for children, youth and family services comprise a significant portion of the District's budget, and while some feel that many of the services are under-funded to meet an ever-increasing need, others contend that poor fiscal management has contributed to the problem.

The goal of this plan is to promote strong children, youth, families, and individuals and communities through a network of human and social services that supports and sustains productive and healthy lifestyles. This plan is a guide for creating a pro-family system of integrated service to address the complex challenges faced by District residents.

The first draft of this plan was presented as two separate plans (*Investing in Children and Youth* and *Strengthening Families*) at the *Citizen Summit* held on November 20, 1999. At the Summit, citizens from across the city discussed their priorities and concerns, and provided specific written feedback. One key message sent from citizens was that in order to reflect the true integration of the District's support strategies, the two plans should be merged. This and other feedback was then incorporated into the final plan.

The following section summarizes citizens' input and identifies how this input determined the direction of the plan. Then, the revised goals of this plan are presented,

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and finally, a detailed chart identifies the specific action steps associated with each goal, the timelines for implementation, and the agencies responsible for leading the implementation.

### CITIZEN INPUT

The resounding message from the Citizen Summit was that *Safe Passages* is a high priority to District citizens. Of all the participants at the Summit, a combined total of 39 percent picked these priority areas as Number 1 – more than any other strategic priority. The following table highlights concerns expressed by citizens, and identifies how the final plan addresses these concerns.

What Citizens Said...	How This Plan Responds...
<i>Improve access to quality health care.</i>	The District will conduct universal health screenings, establish Teen Health Centers to provide counseling and services to youth, and coordinate funding sources to improve nutrition, expand immunizations, and provide public health education. <i>See Goal 8.</i>
<i>Parents need more support and parental training.</i>	New parent development centers, permanency mediation programs, and existing programs will provide training, counseling, and support to parents in need of services. This will include those in situations involving foster care, adoptions, abuse, or other circumstances. <i>See Goal 3.</i>
<i>The elderly need improved care and services.</i>	Focus will be placed on key areas of concern such as housing for the elderly and care in a family setting. Family care issues will be addressed as part of a new Family Caregiver Institute. <i>See Goals 6, 8, 10, and 11.</i>
<i>Children need greater support in preparing for school and succeeding in school.</i>	New pre-school programs will be developed with appropriate standards and materials to ensure that all children are ready to learn once they begin school. For school age children, this plan will improve the physical facilities and academic supports to ensure they succeed. <i>See Goals 1 and 2.</i>
<i>Young people need more recreation and out-of-school time activities.</i>	Through the Children and Youth Investment Trust, the District will create new out-of-school time programs and new entrepreneurial training opportunities, and will expand arts programs and programs for at-risk youth at all ages. <i>See Goals 2, 4 and 5.</i>
<i>More opportunities are needed for adults to continue learning and find job training.</i>	Job training and educational opportunities will be broadcast on Cable TV, and literacy services and English as a second language courses will be provided in neighborhoods. To increase employment opportunities, District contract and vendor agreements will include requirements for jobs and training for District residents. <i>See Goal 11.</i>

The *Safe Passages* plan now incorporates this citizen feedback in the goals presented below.

### ACTION PLAN

This plan is presented in three sections. The first set of goals focus on children and youth. The second set identifies priorities for serving other special populations, like seniors and the disabled. The final set includes specific goals for serving the needs of families and adults in general. All of these goals are presented in summary form below. At the end of this document, these goals are presented in greater detail, including action steps, implementation timelines, and lead agencies. The goals for children and youth are as follows:

- Goal 1 – Children are ready for school
- Goal 2 – Children and youth succeed in school
- Goal 3 – Children and youth live in healthy, stable, and supportive families and environments
- Goal 4 – All youth make a successful transition into adulthood
- Goal 5 – Youth choose healthy behaviors

These goals ensure that a continuum of services and supports is available to children from birth to adulthood. It also focuses not only on education, but also on physical health, mental health, and economic opportunity. Likewise, these goals do not address the needs of young people in isolation. They include considerations for family environments and opportunities for inter-generational learning.

As with children, other special populations in the District require focused attention and support. The following goals serve the needs of elders and the disabled:

- Goal 6 – Seniors are valued and live with dignity and independence in community settings they prefer
- Goal 7 – People with disabilities live with dignity and independence in community settings they prefer

Through these goals, the District will strive to meet not only the material needs of these groups, but also their less tangible, but equally important, needs.

And finally, this plan includes several goals intended to improve the well-being of all residents, whether they be members of families or individuals:

- Goal 8 – All residents have access to quality health care

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- Goal 9 – Families, individuals, and seniors live in healthy, safe and supportive communities
- Goal 10 – All families, children, youth, individuals, and seniors are engaged in and contribute to their communities' decisions and activities
- Goal 11 – All residents have opportunities for lifelong learning
- Goal 12 – All families and individuals are economically self sufficient

These universal goals are critical because they recognize that a child cannot be supported well in an unhealthy family, and a family cannot be supported well in an unhealthy community. As a unified whole, all of the goals presented will ensure the health and well-being of children, youth, families, and the District community as a whole.

To assess progress toward achieving the goals of this plan, performance indicators like the following will be tracked:

- High school graduation rates
- Number of abuse/neglect cases reported
- Physical and mental disease rates
- Percent of residents with health insurance
- Average years of schooling for adults

The specific action steps, results, timelines, and lead agencies associated with these goals are now presented in the table on the following page.

**Safe Passages**

<b>DETAILED ACTION PLAN</b>
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**Goal 1 – Children are ready for school**

#	Action Item	Results	Date Due	Lead Agency
1.	Implement system wide diagnostic evaluation of all 4 year olds enrolled in government subsidized child development centers prior to school entry	System for determining school readiness for 4-year olds	9/01	Parks & Recreation, Public Schools, Human Services,
2.	Increase funding and slots for pre-school and child development programs in areas of highest needs	Create 1,800 new childcare slots	9/01	Human Services, Parks & Recreation, Public Schools
3.	Establish age-appropriate developmental standards for school readiness	Written standards in place and distributed appropriately	10/00	Schools, Human Services, Parks and Recreation
4.	Develop parent education materials for school readiness that chart a child's progress from 0-5 years of age	A developmental guide for city parents with a directory of relevant services and agencies	10/00	Schools, Parks and Recreation, Human Services.

**Goal 2 – Children and youth succeed in school**

#	Action Item	Results	Date Due	Lead Agency
1.	Network of neighborhood-based out-of-school time activities for children and youth	Establish 30 new out of school time programs at the neighborhood and community-based levels	10/00	Children/Youth Investment Trust Fund (CYITF), Deputy Mayor for Children, Youth and Families (Monitor)
2.	Develop work study programs that foster academic and employability skills while assisting students in meeting family economic needs	Passport to Work Program for 12 <sup>th</sup> grade seniors in good academic standing	10/00	Schools, Employment Services
3.	Renovate and dedicate public playgrounds, gyms, swimming pools (i.e. parks and recreation facilities ) to support extended learning opportunities	More playgrounds that meet national safety and quality standards		Schools, Parks and Recreation, Deputy Mayors for Children, Youth and Families and Operations
4.	Provide truancy counselors to work in communities with families.	Lower truancy rate	Ongoing	Schools, MPD
5.	Provide funding to ensure that all students take standardized tests for college entry	Increase in number of students qualifying for college admission	10/01	Schools, Deputy Mayor for Children, Youth and Families, City Council, Financial Authority
6.	Provide a cadre of mentors to assist students in meeting academic requirements	Improved academic performance	10/00	Schools, CYITF, Community Based Organizations, Aging, Parks and Recreation
7.	Provide case managers who work with families to ensure family and community support students completing high school	Support services to families to improve academic performance and high school completion rates	10/01	Schools, Human Services, CYITF

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#	Action Item	Results	Date Due	Lead Agency
8.	Create highly structured alternative programs for at-risk youth	10 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Community Schools with programs to address truancy and other at-risk behaviors	10/00	Schools, CYITF
9.	Set up workshops to facilitate parent and community orientations on postsecondary opportunities	Seminars/workshops for parents at parent development centers located throughout the District	10/00	Schools, CYITF, Employment Services
10.	Help establish parameters for community-based organizations to ensure correlation of community - based activities with academic standards	An array of high-quality, results-oriented out-of-school time activities for District youth	10/00	CYITF, Schools, Commission on Arts and Humanities
11.	Develop a funding mechanism to support school-based mental health services	Increase school-based mental health services	Ongoing	Health, Commission on Mental Health, Schools
12.	Expand number of recreation centers in the District	Break ground on six new centers	12/00	Parks and Recreation

### **Goal 3 – Children and youth live in healthy, stable, and supportive families and environments**

#	Action Item	Results	Date Due	Lead Agency
1.	Establish a network of parent development centers to provide support and assistance to new parents	Establish 6 parent development centers	9/00	Children / Youth Inv. Trust
2.	Implement new programs that stabilize families and promote permanency: - Permanency Mediation Program - Healthy Start/DC - Healthy Families - Family to Family - Community-based Foster Care	System redesign to support implementation of the Adoptions and Foster Care Act of 1999	12/00	Child and Family Services
3.	Expand number of foster care homes in District of Columbia	Increased permanent options for children in District care	12/00	Child and Family Services

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#	Action Item	Results	Date Due	Lead Agency
4.	Hire 10 new attorneys to handle cases associated with Adoptions and Safe Families Act of 1999	Improved technical assistance and work flow to expedite adoption and foster care cases	12/00	Corporation Counsel
5.	Launch a year-long public relations campaign to promote adoption and foster care opportunities	Monthly promotional activities; symposia on issues affecting children in need of permanent homes	12/00	Child and Family Services, Deputy Mayor for Children, Youth and Families
6.	Implement a performance-based monitoring system with Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA) Receiver	Increased effectiveness and efficiency in monitoring agency and contractor performance	12/00	Child and Family Services
7.	Increase job training and employment for former Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) recipients	Increased training and employment options	Ongoing	Human Services, Employment Services
8.	Establish a Family Caregiver Institute	Support system for caregivers for children, the chronically disabled, and senior citizens	3/00	Aging, Human Services, Housing and Community Development
9.	Provide individualized, family centered counseling to victims and perpetrators of violence and abusive behaviors	Increased services to abused families; decrease in confirmed reports of abuse, particularly among children and senior citizens	1/01	Health, Aging
10.	Lead screenings in school health facilities and neighborhood events	Early identification of lead poisoning; increased efforts to abate lead contaminants in homes	Ongoing	Health, Schools



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### Goal 4 – All youth make a successful transition into adulthood

#	Action Item	Results	Date Due	Lead Agency
1.	Establish 5 entrepreneurial training opportunities for youth between ages 14-21	Increased opportunities for youth to explore entrepreneurial opportunities	9/00	Children and Youth Inv. Trust, Dep. Mayor for Children and Families
2.	Identify employment/training opportunities for in-school youth ages 14-24	650 youth in year-round training or employment	9/00	Employment Services

### Goal 5 – Youth choose healthy behaviors

#	Action Item	Results	Date Due	Lead Agency
1.	Fully implement the Roving Leaders program	Youth intervention to target at-risk youth and engage them in positive opportunities and alternatives with a focus on students at risk to drop out	Ongoing	Parks & Recreation
2.	Commission on Arts and Humanities grantees must comply with Department of Juvenile Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention, and NEA Best Practice Models for Arts Programs designed for youth at-risk	Increased arts programming targeting at-risk youth	Ongoing	Commission on Arts and Humanities
4.	Expand DARE and GREAT programs to 5 <sup>th</sup> and 6 <sup>th</sup> graders at 32 schools	More students served; reduced substance abuse among youth	Ongoing	Metropolitan Police

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### **Goal 6 – Seniors are valued and live with dignity and independence in community settings they prefer**

#	Action Item	Results	Date Due	Lead Agency
1.	Establish a Family Caregiver Institute	Respite care, support and training for caregivers; reduced elder abuse and neglect	12/00	Housing and Community Developmt., Human Services
2.	Establish benchmarks for affordable housing for the elderly in the city's Early Childhood Development plan	More slots of affordable housing for the elderly	3/01	Economic Developmt., Housing and Community Developmt., Aging
3.	Establish Wellness Centers for District's seniors	Break ground on Ward 8 Wellness Center	7/00	Aging, Property Management

### **Goal 7 – People with disabilities live with dignity and independence in community settings they prefer**

#	Action Item	Results	Date Due	Lead Agency
1.	Provide supported employment services	Increased employment rate among disabled population	9/01	Human Services, Employment Services, Contracting and Procurement
2.	To design an Institute for Caregiver support with links to information services and training	Respite care, support and training for caregivers; reduced abuse and neglect	9/01	Aging, Human Services, Personnel, Deputy Mayor for Children, Youth, and Families

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#	Action Item	Results	Date Due	Lead Agency
3.	Assessment of Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance in governmental/public facilities and services	Plan for improving accessibility to facilities and services for the disabled	9/01	Personnel, Property Management
4.	Establish benchmarks for affordable housing for the elderly in the city's Early Childhood Development plan	More slots of affordable housing; reduced homelessness	9/01	Economic Developmt., Deputy Mayor for Children, Youth and Families
5.	Enhance the abilities of the MRDDA staff to serve the client population	Change the MRDDA case management staff-to-patient ratio from 1:60 to 1:30	12/00	Human Services

### Goal 8 – All residents have access to quality health care

#	Action Item	Results	Date Due	Lead Agency
1.	Increase enrollment in DC Healthy Families	Enroll 3,500 uninsured District residents in the Healthy Families Program	9/00	Health, Public Benefit Corp.
2.	Conduct universal health screenings with particular focus on cardiovascular disease and cancer	System of health screening to detect disease prevalence and allow for early detection		Health, Public Benefit Corp.
3.	Screening of pregnant women enrolled in the Public Benefit Corporation (PBC) Clinics Network	75% of all uninsured pregnant women receiving proper prenatal care	9/00	Public Benefit Corp., Health
4.	Earmark Medicaid Mental Health Services for Children and Youth and authorize Commission on Mental Health Services (CMHS) to provide these services	Array of mental health services for children and youth	6/00	Mental Health, Health, MAA
5.	Establish teen health centers in public high schools (3)	Three school-based health clinics	9/01	Health, Public Benefit Corp., Public Schools

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#	Action Item	Results	Date Due	Lead Agency
7.	Conduct age appropriate health screenings for all children enrolled in PBC Primary Care	Reduction in the number of children with untreated vision, hearing or health problems	9/00	Health, Public Benefit Corp.
8.	Link Healthy Start and DC Healthy Families Program to extend coverage of home visits	Service system to provide nurse and paraprofessional care to families with newborns	9/01	Health, Human Services, Catholic Charities
10.	All DC Healthy Families and PBC Primary Care Network test at-risk children ages 1-6 for tuberculosis	40% reduction of children ages 1 to 6 infected with TB	9/01	Health, Public Benefit Corp., Managed Care Providers, Public Schools
11.	Expand family centered case management program	Case management information & referrals; transportation services, and burial assistance	1/00	Health

### **Goal 9 – Families, individuals, and seniors live in healthy, safe and supportive communities.**

#	Action Item	Results	Date Due	Lead Agency
1.	Lead screenings in school health facilities and neighborhood events	Early detection and treatment to children and youth; reduced negative health affects among affected populations	Ongoing	Health, Public Schools
2.	Expand job readiness skills to prepare for training or employment	Increased employment among homeless population; more training/ employment opportunities	Ongoing	Human Services, Employment Services

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#	Action Item	Results	Date Due	Lead Agency
3.	Adopt Department of Justice's Best Practices Model in grant processes	More arts related programs for at-risk youth	1/00	Commission on Arts and Humanities

### **Goal 10 – All families, children, youth, individuals, and the seniors are engaged in and contribute to their communities' decisions and activities**

#	Action Item	Results	Date Due	Lead Agency
1.	Create a certified volunteer program	Volunteers for varied community roles	12/00	Parks & Recreation, Public Schools
2.	Establish voter registration sites at all government agencies	More registered voters	10/00	All agencies; Deputy Mayor
3.	Conduct a Citywide Youth Summit	Youth Summit for 1,500-2,000 teens from the District of Columbia	11/00	Parks & Recreation, Neighborhood Action

### **Goal 11 – All residents have opportunities for lifelong learning**

#	Action Item	Results	Date Due	Lead Agency
1.	Begin delivery of neighborhood-based adult literacy services to low-income parents	Establishment of literacy programs	12/00	Libraries, Schools, University of DC, Parks and Recreation
2.	Expand English-as-a-second-language (ESL) classes with literacy components and expand Saturday Stars program (ESL for parents) to all public schools serving populations in need of such services. Also include computer language literacy.	Expanded capacity of ESL classes	6/00	Schools, University of DC, Parks and Recreation

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#	Action Item	Results	Date Due	Lead Agency
3.	Broadcast remedial education and distance learning programs on Cable TV	Increased knowledge among the public about educational opportunities	1/01	Schools, Libraries, Cable TV
4.	Increase access to the Internet	More children using the Internet as a reference tool	1/01	Schools, Libraries

### Goal 12 – All families and individuals are economically self sufficient

#	Action Item	Results	Date Due	Lead Agency
1.	Require that jobs or training opportunities be created for residents as a condition for receipt of a District contract and vendor agreements	Increased job opportunities for residents	Ongoing	Economic Developmt., Contracting and Procurement, Human Services
2.	Provide transitional employment opportunities to District's Welfare to Work participants	Employ 330 Welfare to Work participants in subsidized jobs	12/00	Employment Services